

[Reverend Thurman F. Bowers]

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Box 2 REVEREND THERIN F. BAYER

One notices Therin Bayer. Regardless of the place or the size of the gathering, one notices him. Although handsome and standing six-foot-two, well proportioned with his two-hundred-twelve pounds, it is the peaceful repose seen in his countenance which most attracts one and holds one's gaze. This serenity seems to reach out and take hold of one and a soothing relaxation is felt and the gaze is not a stare but a peaceful contemplation. There is something suggestive akin to a swallow who has found a summer.

Imbued with the depth of this striking and restful personality one senses the great strength of character but fails utterly to grasp any of the strain of struggle, privation of rest in

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study and of unending visits of charity, cheer and consolation, not only among his own congregation but among all the needful.

The work of pastoring, holding revivals, mission work and constant going day and night has extolled its penalty heavily upon his health—but not in his soulful composure.

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As one beholds him one realizes something of the great depth of his sincerity, but are not prepared to grasp the burning intensity of his passion for souls. An intensity of passion born only in the full belief that a soul lost is not only missing the best of this life but is also doomed to an everlasting hell fire. That they will miss the peace and joy of an eternity in that beautiful mansion that Christ has gone to prepare. When one is brought face to face with the full intensity of this passion in his sermons and in his prayers as mighty sobs rack his body and cause his voice to break, one is left aghast with a feeling of sapped strength and wordless awe.

His sermons stir memories of things read about Jonathan Edwards; yet mostly they are freighted with the beauty of Divine Love and Abundant Grace.

He does not despise this life any more than Channing Pollock does, but to him heaven does matter above all things. He is not only concerned about heaven for his own sake but for everyone's sake.

His prayers, long and earnest, include those in hospitals, jails, orphanages; the confined, 3 the underprivileged, and “Lord we pray for those who have no one to pray for them. Lord we pray that thou will be a friend to the friendless.” He prays for those in authority, he prays for those under authority. He prays for people in the mission fields. He prays definitely for people and above all; “Save the people”—and not just beautiful phraseology, or to be long. Many requests for prayers are sent in by people who are not members of the church and a large number come in from people who have never attended his church.

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Rev. Bayer does not favor referring to the church as “his” church—as he says it is “God's” church. He is serious in his attitude in this respect.

He believes and preaches a crucified and resurrected Savior, and that if He be lifted up men shall be drawn to Him and shall be saved.

The McAdoo building where Rev. Bayer had an office-study and sleeping couch was being vacated by all occupants for its complete overhauling.

I found him busy packing when I entered 4 at his invitation. This he was doing in a patient, methodical manner. The stress of the ordeal had left him unruffled and he greeted me warmly with that winning smile of his.

Among his many books ready to pack I noticed a set of some 15 or more volumes, entitled, “A Handful of Purpose”.

First he asked after my health and then inquired about my mother—with a word of sweet praise for her. Then he said, without apology, something about my finding things in a mess.

“Are you taking another office close by?” I asked, “and will you have the same telephone number?”

“No, I'm giving up my phone telephone here and I'm going to try living in my little house in the country.”

“That will be fine,” I answered, thinking that it would be good for him and afford him more rest.

“I'll feel freer in my prayer life there, than I do here; people are so apt to misunderstand.”

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"Yes," I said, thinking of the way I knew he prayed and of those thin office walls. "Some people may think you are trying to emulate Daniel."

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"Yes," he agreed, "and it will be quieter for my studies."

"Reverend Bayer", I said coming to the cause of my visit without further delay after having decided upon a policy of frankness, "I am writing some life histories, and I would like very much to include yours among them. Would you object to answering some questions for me, some personal questions?"

"I'll be glad to do what I can for you," he said. "How soon do you have to have this information?"

He looked gravely concerned, torn between the desire to grant me the time then and there, and the need of attending to his moving.

"If you could write out what you want," he said, "I could take it and work on it tonight and have it for you tomorrow about noon."

"That is fine," I answered. "I have already prepared a list of questions because I know how busy you are and thought that this would be the only way in which we could manage it."

True to his promise and as I had expected, 6 next day about noon he had left for me the information at the place agreed upon.

"What is the size of your parent's family?" I had asked. "Will you tell me something of your ancestry and their occupational background. And where you were born?"

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"I, am the only son of the late Mr. and Mrs. T. C. Bayer of Winston-Salem, N, C. There were five children, one boy and four girls. Two of these girls died in their infancy. My other two sisters are still living. Both are married but the oldest sisters' husband is dead. This sister has a daughter fourteen years of age. I am single.

"Both of my parents were reared in early childhood on the farm but later moved to the city and there made their home, never to return to the farm.

"The place of my birth is High Point, North Carolina. We are the descendants of German stock. Our ancestors came over from Germany perhaps around 1700, and landed in South Carolina, then settled in Davidson County of North Carolina."

"I am interested in your attitude toward education, Mr. Bayer," I said, "and the extent of 7 your school attendance."

"I attended public schools in High Point, North Carolina until I was fifteen and half years of age, then went with my parents to New Castle, Indiana. I entered there upon the work that I chose to follow until I was twenty-five.

"I am in favor of formal education and think it is a forward step in the direction of happiness for the human race. I think everyone should endeavor to obtain at least a high school education in these days of opportunity to obtain such. We should as younger generations appreciate and appropriate the blessings that education offer, remembering that these blessings have come to us through the labors of men and women of like spirits as that of Horace Mann."

"What do you think about school training of economic advantage?" I asked.

"School training should be an economic advantage in that the modern school is endeavoring to teach the child instead of text books. In doing this the child is taught more

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of life and how to live. Home building, industry, thrift and many other things are taught that have direct bearing upon the social and economic life of human 8 kind.”

“What of individual ambition, ideals and the idea of better living?” I asked, “And which do you think comes first owning home or owning car?”

“Every individual should possess the priceless ambition of development in its fullest sense,” he replied, “educationally and spiritually. If one is the possessor of these two desires, then financial security is more than likely to be theirs.

“The owning of a home should come before that of car ownership in the majority of cases. it should be the high and noble ambition of every couple starting out in life to own their own home.”

“What was your age at time of conversion?” I asked, “and what work were you engaged in at that time?”

“I was nearly twenty-two at the time of my conversion. I was foreman in the finishing department (painting) of the Hoosier Kitchen Cabinet Company of New Castle, Indiana. I had been in their employ since shortly before entering upon my sixteenth year.”

“How long after your conversion was it,”

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I inquired, “before you were called to the ministry, and how long before entering the ministry after being called?”

“I answered the call to the ministry three years after my conversion. I had been called to the pastorate of a little church one and one half years after my conversion but declined the offer, entering a year and a half later.”

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"Will you tell me of the denomination and what special preparation you made for duties as a minister?"

"My denomination is the Church of the Nazarene. The Church of the Nazarene requires a special course of four years, in one of our eight colleges, or it can be taken by diligent study under a board of district examiners, of either of our forty-four district boards. However, the under graduate must take examinations under the direction and supervision of the district board of which he or she is a member. This course includes complete survey of the Bible, divided in four years. Theology, American history, American and English literature, church history, psychology, principles of argumentation, composition, etcetera. Twenty-five examinations in all with twenty-five outside reading 10 books with a written synopsis on each.

"Not having gone beyond the eighth grade, I was not exempt on a single subject in our course, so found it necessary to take them all without an exception being granted me.

"If a person has had a full four years high school education, that person is exempted on elementary English and American history."

"I would like to hear about your first pastorate," I said, "and those following up until your present charge."

"My first pastorate," he replied, "was in Kendallville, Indiana. Kendallville was a small city with only 6,000 population at the time. It was a newly organized church with fourteen (14) members. I was their first pastor. We worshipped for three years in a rented upstairs hall. Then we built a beautiful little brick church in downtown Kendallville.

"The work is progressing nicely at this time and they have a nice membership.

"I worked at my trade in the factory while pastoring this church. I received \$10.00 per week for the entire pastorate. However, the people were nice to me, making many splendid gifts

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11 of love and appreciation. I worked in the factory to supplement my salary so we could get on and put our money in the church. For a while, during this pastorate, I also had a church under my supervision at Goshen, Indiana.

"I then went to South Bend, Indiana to pastor the Church of the Nazarene (First Church) of that city. Here I devoted my entire time to the work of the ministry. My pastorate here was of short duration. I was appointed by the General Superintendent to supply the unexpired term of a retiring pastor. I was recalled without a dissenting vote to remain as their pastor, but I had felt an inner urge by the Holy Spirit to come South. This urge had been experienced since the beginning of my ministry. Being born in the South, I felt I should make this my field of ministerial endeavor."

"You then came South and entered upon your present work," I said. "How long ago has that been?"

"I have pastored the Central Church of the Nazarene in Greensboro, North Carolina for the past seven years. I am the first and only pastor of this present organization. We had thirty-eight 12 people the first Sunday when we started revival services. We worshipped in a rented building, which had been used for a tin shop. However, this building was built originally for religious services, by the Friends. Hebrew used it later for a synagogue. After its use as a tine shop and a period of lying idle, a few faithful, loyal and devoted followers of Jesus Christ rented, cleaned, painted and refurnished the place ready for services when I arrived on the field."

"You started with thirty-eight members," I observed. "What is the present membership? And will you give me a brief history of this church and tell me of its present work and outlook?"

"At the present we have a membership of 200 church members. The church is progressing nicely. We have moved out of the rented building and purchased the First Moravian Church building within one square of our original location. We have also, in recent months,

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purchased a large brick residence which adjoins our church building property. This building was purchased for \$10,00 and is paid for in monthly instalment. We plan to use this building for a Christian educational center.

"The depression affected us as it did 13 others, but they paid the pastor every cent of his salary (though the salary was small); every cent of rent was paid, along with home and foreign missionary budgets. However at times, salary and rent were in arrears.

"Our finances are much better now. However we have received a steady (not phenomenal) stream of new members into the church, but our obligations have also increased. We have some \$12,000 church property obligations. We are meeting the obligations on the house by the month and on the church building every six months. All financial obligations are paid up to date.

"We have twelve classes in our Sunday School, with others to be organized soon. There are around 300 on roll, with an attendance of 200 and over each Sunday."

"Would you tell me of the main policy and beliefs of church," I asked.

"Main policy and belief is that Jesus Christ died to save all men and that every man should be given the privilege of hearing the Gospel in his own native tongue. The doctrines as taught by John Wesley and the early Methodists are earnestly taught and advocated."

"Would you mind giving your personal attitude toward your work", I asked, "and tell something of your experiences during recent years. You spoke very favorably of education, and I believe you have sought to augment yours under difficult handicaps."

"Personally I take great pride in the work to which I have given myself. As for education, since coming to Greensboro, I have gone for four years to Wake Forest College and Elon College where I obtained the A.B. degree. I completed this work in a little over four

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years driving to and fro each day most of the time. I took care of the work of the church in connection with my school work.

“There were three of us (young ministers) from Greensboro, who were admitted to the Divinity School of Duke University this year but due to illness I had to drop this work. One of my friends had to do likewise

“I do not take personal pride but am glad to say that the good Lord and the kindly influences of good Christian people in and outside of my denomination have made me what I am today. Except for these outside influences I no doubt would be back in the factory today and also in sin. Now I 15 do not mean to say that there would be anything wrong with my working in the factory again. I lived a contented, happy life while working there, and preached the Gospel while doing it. I may go back to it someday, but if I do, I want to still preach the blessed Gospel.”

“Reverend Bayer, your work in preaching, holding revivals, weekly broadcasting over the radio, marriages, funerals, constant calls upon the distressed and sick, in addition to your studies in college has had some toll upon your health, has it not?”

“Yes, my work has been strenuous. It should be obvious that this is true. Working in factory, helping build new churches, all the many things attendant to the ministry and studying hard, my health, no doubt has been impaired. Another big strain upon my health, I think, has been irregular eating hours in so many different eating places. This has been going on for years. You know how it is without a home life, and going day and night. But I think my health is much better than it would have been had I continued in sin. God is good. I try every day to exemplify this in my attitude toward Him and His subjects of mercy, human kind.”

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“ Weill Will you give a personal political expression?”

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"Of course. I am liberal in my politics. I always vote for the man instead of the "party."

"Is it urged, stressed, or encouraged, as a denominational policy for the members of the church to exercise their rights at the polls as Christian citizens? To what extent do you think the members of the church you pastor, exercise their privilege in voting. If they are urged as a church to cast their ballots, is it upon issues instead of parties? If so, what issues?"

"It is a denominational policy and is stressed by the denomination that each member of voting age exercise their rights at the polls. It is deemed by the denomination as a Christian's obligation to vote on issues rather than for the political party.

"The temperance issue is one of the main issues considered by the denomination. The great democratic principals of equality and fair play are issues by which the majority of our constituency can be depended to stand by.

"I think that the membership of the local church can be depended on, to a large extent, to exercise their privilege in voting, yet I am not satisfied until all see the Christian obligation of such and carry such obligation out to its fullest extent."

Therin Bayer deals frankly and honestly with one and with life. Recently he was placed in a dilemma by being given as reference by a young man who had changed jobs quite often and of whom he knew very little. He wanted to help the young man but he would not mislead in anyway the prospective employer who had written him regarding the applicant, so Rev. Bayer took it upon himself to go out and try to find all the good he could in behalf of the young man. I am sure that whatever his reply contained was the facts as he had learned them.

His life is motivated by saving the souls of men as he goes about doing good. It's never a case of "thumbs down" with him. I've known him to help and be friendly with the "fallen" — (when their own family had kicked them out) inspite of people cautioning him not to

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and in the face of criticism. There are people today who have found themselves through his undying concern and Christ like love, and who are now happy, when once life had closed in on them and society was ready to trample them beneath its self-righteous feet.

Rev. Bayer lives earnestly, simply and without affection affectation . If you ever meet him, you will learn to love him, and the memory of him will never leave you.